

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Personal Loading Advantages

Ohio Manufacturing Extension Partnership

From Concept to Creation: Personal Loading Advantage Taking Its Idea All the Way

Client Profile:

Personal Loading Advantages (PLA) is a small entrepreneurial company started by Laura Gordos and Steve Garfield in 2003 in Cleveland, Ohio. The 2-employee company was founded based on a new product idea for a comprehensive loading solution.

Situation:

Entrepreneurs Laura Gordos and Steven Garfield came out of the Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management inspired with a new product opportunity. Their idea was to provide people with a solution to ease the difficulty many encounter when loading large, oversized and awkward items into their vehicles. Realizing that starting a business is a difficult and sometimes unrewarding process, the pair approached the Product Development team at the Cleveland Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (CAMP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to help flush out their ideas and develop conceptual product designs.

Solution:

The process began with an ideation session for product concepts. This innovative approach to new product development engaged the staff of PLA, CAMP Product Development engineers, personal contacts and business people from the community in a creative, collaborative effort. The ideation session was a two-day event, divided into four sessions. After a first day full of idea generation, product sketches and a wide variety of possible concepts, the pair felt a little overwhelmed. Ideas evolved and were streamlined during the second day, helping Laura and Steven see the drawbacks involved with some of the concepts and zero in on the more feasible ideas. When both sessions were completed, PLA had several solid product concepts to research, finalize and develop for production. With the help of a product development loan provided by Cuyahoga County Department of Development, PLA has entered the engineering/prototyping stage with one of the new product concepts developed during this ideation session. PLA was awarded a loan of \$60,000 as part of the Cuyahoga County New Product Development and Entrepreneurship Program Product Innovation Loan Fund, developed by the Cuyahoga County Department of Development and administered by CAMP, which will provide \$1 million in total funds for new product development. With funds from the county loan program, PLA has begun engineering and prototyping development of the new concept. Detailed engineering design drawings, engineering analysis, material selection and manufacturing process specifications have all been completed. The next steps include developing, testing and evaluating a working prototype, followed by a final design modification based on the prototype testing. Completion of the functional prototype is expected within the next several months.

Results:

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- * Developed conceptual product designs for personal loading device.
- * Awarded \$60,000 product development loan from Cuyahoga County to begin engineering and prototyping development of new concept.

Testimonial:

"There was a big payoff in the end. The ideas began to flow and came into focus. The potential products we walked away with are solid. CAMP helped us take the idea about 75 percent of the way there, and the loan will help us get even further."

Steven Garfield, Co-President